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Requirere

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by

Suzanne Margaret White

Committee in charge:

Professor Juana de Laban, Chairman

Professor James Kerans

Professor Pia Gilbert

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The thesis of Suzanne Margaret White is approved:

Pia S. Gilbert

James Jean

Thore de lahar  
Committee Chairman

University of California, Los Angeles

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

"REQUIRERE"

by

Suzanne Margaret White

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Professor Juana de Laban, Chairman

The purpose of this thesis was to develop a dance structure which would present Requirere as the act of Requiem which occurs in the mind of an individual attempting to reconcile the inevitability of death. This idea became manifest when I sought to recreate the semblance of a dream; as man uses the dream to absorb his anxieties about reality.

In Requirere it is the involuntary submission of the dreamer to her dream, wherein, she is forced to watch the death of her soul, because she is the dreamer. Requirere bridges contradictions and assembles incongruities in a liturgical dream celebration of death. The dance was performed in Room 208 of the Women's Gym of the University of California at Los Angeles on December 4, 5, and 6, 1968 at 8:30 p.m.

The written summary of this choreographic thesis contains a discussion of preparations for making the dance, the development of the dance, collaboration with the musical composer, the costume and set designer, the lighting designer and an evaluation of these elements. A program from the concert, costume and make-up designs also have been

also have been included.

The thesis and a video-tape of the dance and music are filed with the Department of Dance at the University of California, Los Angeles.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The magic around ritual has always been a point of fascination for me. In Requirere it was my purpose to heighten the idea of ritual in presenting the dance as an act of Requiem; I created my own feeling of the coming of the end as it occurs in the mind of an individual, e.g., the dreamer. Although Requirere provided no solution to the problem of reconciling the individual to the inevitability of death, it was a symbolic statement of an individual to come to grips with the problem.

The dream plays of August Strindberg greatly influenced my approach to the use of the dream form. Strindberg, in creating his play-dreams, used the elements of actual psychical dream work; the elements according to Freud are: condensation, displacement, visualization and secondary elaboration. As such it was my intention in Requirere to introduce the work with a composite of seemingly unrelated figures and ideas and progress in such a way as to reveal their coherent importance to the dreamer, and which by their occurrence, fulfill the choreography and bring it to its natural conclusion. These figures ultimately became cold symbols, seen from a distance. But this was my intention. Their coldness is the cutting edge of the outrage.

The dream, as I conceive it, is man's attempt to resolve his anxieties with reality. In Requirere it is an individual's anxiety about death that impells the submission of her (who is the dreamer) to the dream. Requirere, as a liturgical dream celebration of death, pushes to nightmare distortion the act of Requiem.

The dance was performed in Room 208 of the Women's Gym of the University of California at Los Angeles on December 4, 5 and 6 at 8:30 P.M. The following chapters will include my preparations for the making of the dance, the development of the dance and an evaluation.

Robert W. Corrigan II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to present the ideas found in literature which influenced my approach to the form of Requirere as dream, as the act of Requiem and the larger issues related to all dream work which support my beliefs about the function of the dream. Requirere is a choreography of the attempt of an individual to reconcile the finality of death. It is developed here that the individual uses the dream to absorb his anxiety and therein the illusion of a liturgical dream celebration of death takes place. It is the death of the dreamer's soul which the individual is forced to watch because she is the dreamer.

"The psychical dream rises out of the unconscious mind of the dreamer and represents to him in a series of symbolic images the problems and wishes most central to him."<sup>1</sup> Death and the reconciliation with the reality of it, is of profound subjective concern to man. August Strindberg felt that dramatic form was a mimetic expression which objectified subjective experience. As it was necessary to Strindberg, it was important to the communication of my intent to develop a form which would be directly expressive of itself, i.e., "A dream is not a representation of something other than itself; more accurately, it is a structure of relationships in which meaning is a function of form and form its own meaning."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert W. Corrigan, "Strindberg and the Abyss," August Strindberg: A Dream Play and the Ghost Sonata. With Selected Notes to the Members of the Intimate Theatre, trans., C.R. Mueller, ed., R.W. Corrigan (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1966) p. xx.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. xvi.



psychic expressionism, i.e., the dream play, play-dream. The first was not successful Corrigan explains, partly due to Strindberg's haphazard linking of the dream events and a failure to follow the internal form of a dream (see above). By comparison, The Ghost Sonata contains both the form and the contents of an actual dream. Requirere was an intensely subjective statement which sought this kind of symbolic structure. I believed this dream form adequate to house my feelings because it would enable me to present a personal vision extended beyond itself for broader communication.

The dream form, to work as an art form, must consist of a constantly evolving dream action, devoid of objective judgement, i.e., of the intrusion or comparison of the waking conscious world. For example, in A Dream Play the central character flip-flops between the role of participant in the dream events and the role of observer to them, within the dream. The result is that her judgement of the dream makes absurd the symbolic significance of the dream truths. The central character in The Ghost Sonata is the "one single governing consciousness." He is aware that the dream he is about to participate in is the dream of the play. The play ends and the dream ends when he wakes up and is able to analyze why it all happened. I chose to cite this analysis of the use of this technique because it was to influence the way I would develop the role of my central figure, the Celebrant.

In dealing with reconciliation with death, I felt that I wanted to recreate the feeling of the liturgical celebration for the dead, i.e., the act of Requiem. I wanted to create the whole sense of

something departing in recapturing the aura or magic around ritual. Thus, I created my own feeling of the coming of the end, but in a liturgical dream celebration of death. Since Requiem also refers to the musical setting on the text of the Mass for the dead, it is not surprising that a number of composers, Mozart, Brahms, Cherubini, Britten and others have conceived their own Requiems. In listening to several compositions, both in concert and through recordings, I was repeatedly impressed by a quality of absoluteness. This cold and distant setting gains exceptional strength and effectiveness from the abstract handling of the material. This perception greatly influenced the way in which I would subsequently handle the dream content of the ritual.

The formula of Hermes which the surrealist Andre Breton took up in the second Manifeste du Surrealism in 1929 was the following:

'Everything leads us to believe that there exists a spot in the mind from which life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the high and the low, the communicable and the incommunicable will cease to appear contradictory.'<sup>4</sup>

This statement was incorporated into the new theoretical edifice of surrealism, and it was to play an increasingly larger role in 'the programme.' There was also the following injunction: 'I request the profound, true occultation of surrealism.'<sup>5</sup> This tradition was inherited from the Magicians, the Initiates and the Illuminated. I draw attention to the above because I came across it at a point in the choreography when I was hesitant to accept

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<sup>4</sup>Surrealism, ed., Patrick Waldberg (New York, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Co., no date given) p. 43.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

certain intuitive ideas. This statement extended the possibilities of the dream form for me. It was to effect a more daring approach to the choreography.

Finally, a statement by Strindberg was to cement my conviction about the form of Requirere as dream:

"Sleep the liberator, is often tortuous; and yet when pain is at its worst, the sufferer is wakened and reconciled with reality. For however agonizing reality may be, it is at this moment, when compared to the torments of a dream, a joy."<sup>6</sup>

For, it seemed to me that the state of becoming reconciled with the finality of death, must occur ultimately, in relation to another level of reality, i.e., the dream.

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<sup>6</sup>Corrigan, op. cit., "Author's Note."

### III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE DANCE

As presented in the dance concert, Requirere was a choreography in five sections: "Dialogus-Loco Movere-Crede-Caerimonia-Carmen." The following discussion outlines the development of the dance by these sections. "Dialogus" is an announcement; the nature of which is the infringement of the figures, the Sacrificalis (Kathleen Erickson), the Sacricolae (Valerie Takeshita), and the Ministrantes (Carolyn Brown, Virginia Chick and Gwen Garside) upon the dreamer, the Celebrare, in a mish-mosh of their themes and motifs. Musically, pieces of thematic material are presented in a broken and jagged form. In "Loco Movere" the dreamer is confronted by the figure of her spirit, the Sacrificalis. The dreamer recognizes her as such and a duet evolves. The duet is repeated with the interruption by the Sacrocalae and the Ministrantes. The music by now had become refined through the building up on two or three themes and the quality had become more sustained. The "Crede" is the cry of the spirit. This section was marked by a musical crystalization of Requirere. "Caerimonia" is a proclamation of death and the enactment of it but it is not finalized because the "Carmen" section, acting as a coda, is the interruption of the dream by the dreamer, as she is seen trying to hold unto life.

The dream was simple, at least in synopsis. As discussed above, it dealt with the particular dream events leading up to the death of the dreamer's soul. I was not so much interested in the incident and figures, as with these dream events which drive them to the

inevitable conclusion. I attempted to avoid sentimentality and in its place, substitute a stark background of vastness and timelessness.

The dance began with the single figure of the dreamer, upstage center. She moved in silence to downstage left through alternating pools of intense colored light which faded out behind her. She moved driven by her own heartbeat, and resisting sleep as the knowledgeable dreamer of the dream she is about to enter. The image of the heartbeat originated in a solo which I choreographed for myself in 1966. It was the conceptual beginning for Requirere and was to emerge finally as the important thematic material. Second in importance were the clear-cut diagonal paths which emphasized my intention in the choreography.

In the development of the dance the rhythmic and dynamic repetition of the dreamer's movement spilled over into the choreography for the other figures; realizing this, I attempted to push it to an extreme as a technique to capture the quality of ritual, especially for the Ministrantes.

The figure of the Sacrificialis made the second appearance in the image of the dreamer's soul. She was costumed in the lavish gold garb of the Church. Since she was not costumed like the dreamer, and in order to identify her immediately as an extension of the dreamer, I had her enter with the same movement following the diagonal floor pattern established by the dreamer. The alternating pools of light, with the use of purple along this path, did a great deal in helping to forecast the importance of this. The Sacrificialis originally was going to be costumed in black, to be as strong as the dreamer (who

was costumed in white), but in a different way. Instead, the Ministrantes were costumed in black in order for their sharp movement quality to be seen clearly. The Sacrificalis's dress came from ecclesiastical research and her headdress was taken directly from the Pope. Malcolm McCormick, my costume designer, said that he was disgusted by the heaping of riches on cardinals and that it was his intention to heap as much gold on her as possible. As a result, it did cover some of the movement since the movement was sparse and understated.

The dreamer encountered the Ministrantes next, who enter frontily, upstage right, silouetted against the back wall. The peculiar appearances moving in an archaic style was intended to cause the audience to look through them to establish a feeling of vastness and timelessness. But an incongruous slide of a group of men dressed in casual clothes of the 1920's, frames and closes off the space as if as another aspect of the audience, called to witness and participate in the celebration.

The idea for the use of the slides, interspersed throughout the dance, was inspired by a picture of the visit of the Pope to South America, in which he is seen administering the rites in a huge arena-like place. There, I felt the whole celebrious nature of ritual and it seemed most appropriate for me to introduce this aspect of ritual in the presentation of Requirere.

This picture, together with the impression that I had given to Mr. McCormick about Requirere, influenced his approach in the dance toward the spectacular. He began by looking for ecclesiastical

garb and finally decided upon a more generalized flavor of rich ceremony. Although the latter idea was agreeable by me, I essentially felt that he was not moving in the same direction as I was. He told me later, that after attending a few rehearsals and seeing very sparse movement that he would work within the concept of dressing up the piece and try to bring me around to this. Mr. McCormick's first idea had come for the Ministrantes, because they were doing most of the movement. He gave them a gold headpiece with a gold ball as an abstract symbol of ceremony and to depersonalize them. He also used the gold to accentuate the underside of the arms, since this part of the body is ritually symbolic. The black transparency of their dresses gave the effect of a simple and stark line, as was also true of the dreamer's white transparent dress.

It was Mr. McCormick's intent to make the dreamer the most important and the most simple. Her costume was symbolic of spirituality, simplicity, vulnerability (he achieved this by using the expressionist's approach of exposing the breast--the open heart), and a detachment from human evils and knowledge.

The last figure to intrude upon the dreamer was the Sacrocolae, who was the most extravagant and spectacular. This figure had a magical quality along with the impression of inhumanness. She moved with her own collection of ritualistic gestures, angular and abruptly abandoned. Her theme was vague and abstract. Originally, I had referred to the Sacrocolae as a shaman. At that time Mr. McCormick got an idea for the headdress for this figure from the Tibetan devil trap. From this oriental beginning he had to decide to make the rest

of her costume more or less oriental. He decided to de-emphasize this point, in view of the rest of the costumes. The Saccrocolae develops as a kind of manager of magic, a master of sacred ceremonies, dictating and prescribing the events of this liturgical celebration.

The dance was begun, then, in this chaotic simmering with the particles strangely ordered and related. It was my intention to impose this quality of a restrained magical operation, in which a foreseeable end was being prescribed. And yet, the pronouncement of death in the "Caerimonia" was meant to be a harrowing experience for the audience.

In the dichotomy of sound, Richard Russell's musical score created an atmospheric synthesis comparable to the dance. Consequently, the texture of sound was at times "thick" through orchestration, but also, inadvertantly "thin" through instrumentation, and the very nature of the medieval uses of unisons and parallel fifths. The melodic lines were often extremely simple and repetitive, as the movement was simple and repetitive. Mr. Russell said that the scores of Carl Orff influenced his use of the machine-gunlike repetition of a single note. While rhythmically, there was an attachment to Stravinsky's primitivism (the first page of the Preludium changes each measure,  $\frac{4}{4} \frac{5}{4} \frac{2}{4} \frac{3}{4} \frac{9}{4} \frac{4}{4}$ ).

Mr. Russell and I agreed from the beginning that we wanted voices. We also had considered the organ and two different stringed instruments. However, as we talked, we decided to take it out of the church and into the field, so to speak, and we substituted the piano for the organ. Mr. Russell dropped the two stringed instruments because he needed an



instrument that could have strength and could also be ceremonial.

Mr. Russell set out to produce a score which would enhance the medieval quality of the dance while retaining a contemporary flavor. I drew up a simple text which was translated into medieval Church Latin by Professor Stephen Kayser. In retrospect it would have been more appropriate to have created a none language, and also in view of the difficulty of putting a text to a completed score, as was the case here. The musical structure of moving obliquely to the dance was an effort to keep the sound steady while allowing the dance to continue to move. The music was so much a part of Requirere, that the choreography was most clear when it was performed with the music.

It was an initial suggestion of Penny Leavitt's, along with Mr. McCormick and myself, that the lighting, the costumes and the set should be designed specifically for the atmosphere of Room 208 while concentrating upon the sense of dream illusion. The result was the use of neutral colors for the costumes to go with the green walls of Room 208. Second, Miss Leavitt wanted to light green occasionally which influenced the idea for light make-up. Third, to further produce the sense of dream illusion, there was no set. In lighting for overall unity Miss Leavitt proceeded to create an atmosphere that was somber with energy.

Miss Leavitt, too, began by approaching the piece religiously: Medieval, Mass and ritual were words with which she came to the first showing. At that time I established to Miss Leavitt that the dance happened as an event, in the same time and place. At the second showing, the space, paths and directions were perceived as important

by Miss Leavitt, but like the movement, as an understated comment. Miss Leavitt's concern was how she could understate it with lights. By the third showing, when I had clarified the form of Requirere as dream, Miss Leavitt decided to emphasize the spatial directions and she took on diagonals. As noted previously, the lighting in the beginning was intense purple and deep pink. It is pertinent to mention here that the dreamer enters the audience after the "Loco Movere" section and sits down to watch the "Crede" section. There was no light on the dreamer at that point, but Miss Leavitt thought afterwards that she should have used a light over the chair in the audience.

Mr. McCormick was pleased with the way that Miss Leavitt was lighting the costumes. In fact many of the lighting decisions were based solely upon heightening the costumes. Mr. McCormick commented to me afterwards that I shouldn't let the costumer do this the next time. This is a problem when the choreographer is performing in her own dance. Mr. McCormick also mentioned that if he were to costume it again, he would have done it more simply. He also felt that it needed an environment created by layers of plexiglass, along with the slides, that would imply great openness and distance.

My committee chairman, composer, costume and lighting designers afforded an extraordinary artistic complement to the presentation of Requirere. It was as though, together, they fulfilled my vision of what Requirere should have been. As was mentioned before, the discovery of the dream form provided me with the structure most capable of expressing my intent. This discovery, however, did not occur until shortly before the third showing in November. Prior to

this my composer and designers were working only with the ideas of Requiem, ceremony, ritual, allness of experience. . . timelessness.

When Mr. McCormick came to see the progress of the choreography for the second time, he was confused about another aspect; he saw masculine intents in some of the movement. This was certainly true for the figure of the Sacricolae, the "shaman." If I were to present the dance again, I would cast a man in that role. Valerie Takeshita, who danced the Sacricolae, is a towering figure of a woman. I believed it "worked" all right with her.

As a final comment about the development of the dance, I came across the following Sanskrit Maxim in a late 1968 issue of Vogue Magazine:

Where the hand goes, the eye follows,  
Where the eye goes, the mind follows,  
Where the mind goes, the heart follows,  
And thus is borne expression.

This reminded me of my beginning work on the concert in the summer of 1968; painstakingly, allowing the movement of my hands and arms, at first mimicking my heartbeat, to carry and lead my body through space in a sustained quality, and without knowing it at that time, into the dream of the dance.

#### IV. EVALUATION

It has been stated here that my concern in this thesis concert was to develop a dance structure which would present Requirere as the act of Requiem, occurring in the mind's-eye of an individual.

My search for a form, which would make clear my idea, turned out to be not only my major concern, but also the crucial issue in my work. Until the form had been clarified, communication with members of my committee, and importantly, with my composer and designers, was limited.

However, the theatrical considerations did evolve with the development of the choreography as was implied in Chapter III. I feel that this way of working is most satisfactory and contributes to a total theatrical presentation. There were several instances when their ideas would provoke ideas in me. Although, since I was unable to verbalize much in the beginning, they were saddled with intuiting my concepts about the dance. This becomes a serious problem when there is a deadline to meet. An earlier start on the choreography with the dancers, alone, may have been helpful.

Rehearsals began with a cast that was selected privately, three months before the performance date, and at that time, too, Malcolm McCormick, Richard Russell and Penny Leavitt were included in the production. I would have felt freer to go ahead with a cast in the summer if I had made my presentation in the spring; instead, it was scheduled for the early fall.

The shape of the whole dance concert, which included Requirere

and other choreography by students of the dance department, was a disappointment to me. There was the opinion that the program must be longer than one-half hour (the length of Requirere) for the sake of the paying audience. I didn't agree but the program was really not within my jurisdiction.

I felt that the two halves, together, were aesthetically wrong, even though the attempt was made (i.e., in using the three solo dances) to complement the thesis presentation. There was the feeling, too, that some of the people involved in the first half, did not wish to be involved. This put a damper on the concert for me.

There is the perennial issue of whether the thesis candidate should perform in his or her own work. It limits one's perspective. Yet, the performance involvement in the work, especially if one tends toward this aspect of dance art, is fulfilling. I don't feel that it should be required unless the person wishes to do it. Because I was performing, it was necessary to leave many of the theatrical decisions up to my designers during the technical rehearsals.

I never saw the dance; I only felt it as one member of a fine cast. It seems unlikely that Requirere will be recreated, because the "requirement" for it has been satisfied.

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